

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Whole No. 483

Travels of a Book Collector

By Jack R. Schorr and H. W. Miller



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES No. 155

THE BOY'S OWN NOVELS

Publisher: Norman L. Munro & Co., 28 & 30 Beekman St., New York. Issues: 16 (highest number seen). Dates: 1873? Schedule of Issue: Unknown. Size: 61/8 x4". Price: 10c. Pages: 100. Illustrations: hand-stenciled colored pictorial cover. Contents: Variety of adventure yarns, mostly reprints of English publications. Even Gulliver found its way into this series.

Travels of a Book Collector

1. By Jack R. Schorr

It is strange some of the things you run into when you take a vacation, and particularly when you look for books and antiques on the way. We decided to go to Yellowstone and then head northwest to Washington and come down the coast to home. A beautiful trip through Utah and Wyoming, especially with the fall foliage which I miss, living in Southern California.

I was looking forward to visiting a fine old book store en route, which I had heard about. To my disappointment, when I located it, I found that they had a fire two weeks previous and the books which I was interested in were in the basement and were water damaged. I still would have liked to have seen them, but no luck. I did find a Henty first, "With Clive in India" with just a small water mark on the spine, which they had salvaged and which I got for half price. They must have had 1500 juvenile books damaged and destroyed. It makes one sick, for the owner told me his stock was one of the best in that area and all in nice condition.

To offset that, I ran into a nice bookstore in the northwest area where they were having a one cent sale—buy one and get a second for one cent. They had several good books I wanted. I got a mint copy of Bonehill's "Lost in Land of Ice" and a couple of Leo Edwards books in super nice condition, plus a scarce book which I had previously seen in one local bookstore priced at \$15, called "With Touch of the Elbow," by Capt. James Wells, Winston, 1909. The reason I recalled the book was the beautiful blue and silver cover. I walked out with 6 excellent books for less than \$5.00.

I had good luck in the San Francisco area where I found a couple of Eaton's Boy Scout series in fine condition, not the easiest series to find either. And a nice first of "Dorothy's Double" by Henty, Rand and McNally. The Henty was a sleeper which I picked up for a couple of bucks. Usually the San Francisco dealers are pretty sharp and know their stock well.

In going through Idaho, way out in the country, I found a large metal building surrounded by used plumbing parts, car parts, and other junk. There was a sign posted saying, "Book Sale 10c a book." Inside they must have had 5000 books and at least a couple thousand women's shoes. This guy had bought up this stuff at auction. They, surprisingly, were all arranged and after going through them I only found one and that was one I needed to complete my Sabin "Trail Blazer Series." The rest were all adult fiction. In Idaho Falls, in an antique dealer's basement, I completed my "Flying Machine Boy Series" with one I needed.

As usual on these trips I improved what I had, ended up with duplicates which I will sell or trade.

Among some of the scarcer and more unusual books I came up with was "Scientific American Boy" by Bond, Munn and Co. This was the only book I found in a place where last year I found thirty books. The supply is dimin-

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ishing and the dealers are not able to replenish like they used to. Then "Lost in Land of Ice," as previously mentioned. A fine copy of "Land of Ice And Snow" in the Young Mineralogist Series by Houston, A. J. Rowland, 1912. A first American edition of "For the Temple" by Henty including the other Henty I mentioned previously. I would call these early Hentys scarce in these heavy delux editions.

"In Michigan Lumber Camps," Boys vacation series by Charles Albert Whittier, published by F. Tennyson and Neely Co. Very attractive light blue ribbed

binding with a bear standing on his hind feet in silver on the jacket.

"Our Week Afloat" and "Down the Bay" by Stanley, Belford and Clark a handsome matched set. "Rex Wayland's Fortune" or the "Secret of the Thunderbird" by H. A. Stanley, Laird and Lee. "A New York Boy"—Alger, American Publishing Company, fine condition.

"A Boy I knew and Four Dogs" one of the few boys' stories written by Laurence Hutton, very attractively bound and published by Harper, 1899. Some of these were unusual to me, as I had never run across them, but that doesn't make them scarce, only worth mentioning as a matter of interest to collectors of boys' books.

After I got home, I wrote letters to several dealers, after second thoughts about a couple of books I had seen on their shelves which were better than mine. I am sure we have all done this. That's why I jot down an outstanding book which I know I have, so I can check it when I get home.

Well, that's one trip for a couple of months, at least. Will cover new territory next time. My wife is interested in a trip to the Arctic, but I sure don't know why.

2. By H. W. Miller

Every year on our vacation trip I try to keep an eye open for old boys books. I keep an eye open for old dime novels too, but evidently this part of the country never had many, or they were destroyed. Bought one at a local flea market for \$3 a while back—probably more than it was worth. Boys books is a different matter, and perhaps that is the reason they seem to be taking the place of the rarer (or scarcer) dime novels. Of course it is rather disconcerting to discover that the books one read as a boy are now collectors items. It is difficult for one to realize how the years go by and one or two generations have come since "our" boys books were on the stands. But when one sees the comic books of a relatively few years ago become collectors items, we realize that books of 40, 50 or more years ago are getting scarcer, and consequently more to be saved in collections.

Admittedly I am no expert, but in printing the Dime Novel Roundup for many years, I do have an idea of the authors, possibly those more popular (both then and now) and those who, in general, might be a "better buy."

This last summer, with a trip through Illinois, Michigan (and across Lake Michigan on the car-train ferry), Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska and home, I saw few places where old books "for juveniles" could be purchased. But as the saying goes, once is enough. It was at the Wisconsin Dels that I noticed on a window the AAUW was having a book sale. In case you don't know, this organization is the American Association of University Women. I don't know how extensive this organization is, but I suppose it is nationwide. I know the local chapter has a book sale each year, perhaps it is a popular way to raise revenue. I always knew they had books for sale, but just couldn't feature them having old boys books! But I suppose they have brothers, fathers or friends who bought and read them in their hey-day.

I decided I'd take a look anyway—being interested in old books in general,

so my wife and I walked a block or two to get to it. They had several long tables, with the general bunch of "old books" and the same old school books one sees, but on a card table in the back was a sign "Children's Books." And mixed in with the "Dick and Jane" first and second grade type books were the old boys books. The price? 15c each. It was getting near the end of the day and one of the ladies announced that all prices would be cut in half! Consequently at 7½c per, I took anything that could be construed as a boys book. The Rover Boys, Tem Slade (one each). A book by Ellis. Several others by lesser known authors. One from their regular stack at 12½c net, Merry Men by R. L. Stevenson. I felt the trip worth while.

Other collectors might watch such sales, better bargains might be found than at the flea markets where prices seem to be greatly inflated. They're

fine for selling-not buying in my estimation.

As an aside to the many Roundup readers who read Indian and pioneer stories of Kentucky, Ohio and the "Northwest," we can report on part of our trip that might be of interest to them. My paternal grandmother came from Revolutionary ancestors who settled in Ohio (war land grant touching the "Virginia Military Line") during the troubled times many of us read about in our dime novels. As one researcher said of them, "they must have been on friendly terms with the Indians to have even lived there." Emigration to Illinois, where my grandmother was born, found them just 150 years ago this year as co-first settlers in McLean County (Bloomington). With one new book written this year, and another (new to me) just a couple of years ago, with family pictures and stories, we had to stop there and meet the authors. My great-grandfather was John Wells Dawson, and here again they were "friendly with the Indians." "He brought his Indians" to a celebration, so one story goes. Was the renegade Simon Girty in Illinois? Another story goes that his Indian wife took care of my great-uncle. Shortly after, the Indians there were moved on west and southwest.

I know many of our readers are Circus buffs also, so I must mention too, that we stopped at the Circus Museum at Baraboo, Wisc. Any who have an interest in the old circuses and get anywhere near there should go thru it. It brought back many memories of older days when we used to get up at 5 to see the circus trains unload, and set up. As I got older, also to see them tear down. It is something seldom seen nowadays to see a wagon down to its axle in mud with a six- or eight hitch of horses in front and an elephant in the rear pull and push it out. As one gets older, life is a series of memories.

When we were mailing the Roundup after we got back, my wife says, "hey

did you know we had a subscriber at the Circus Museum?"

Now she tells me.

PAPERBACKS, DIME NOVELS AND THE VIRTUES OF READING SERIES BOOKS

By Jack Dizer

Frank Merriwell is back in paperback, Bigglesworth is in paperback, and even G. A. Henty is in paperback. Of course, Frank started in paperback, in a sense, and graduated to hard cover (reversing the usual trend, but of course this wasn't difficult for a Merriwell) and it is his son Frank, Jr., who is the hero of the current series. Biggles only goes back 20 or 30 years, so it is encouraging, but not surprising, to see him in paperback. But when Henty, a writer who died in 1902 suddenly comes back into print it proves there is hope yet for the youth of this generation!

My exposure to the Henty paperbacks started in India, several summers

ago. Summer evenings in Southern India can be beautiful. Madras is a delightful city with shops of almost every sort. After my duties with the National Science Foundation program, I would visit shop after shop. If I wanted carvings or brass or batik or bells there was no problem. Or even beer, though Tamil Nadu is technically a dry state. But books was a different story. In a city of 2,000,000 there should have been Salvation Army stores, garage sales, ('rickshaw sales?), rummage sales, old book stores, in short, my kind of thing. But nothing. At least nothing I could find. Not even a Kipling did I come across although I did find that he was well known and not resented as much as I had expected. But finally I hit pay dirt. In a modern childrens book and toy shop I found Henty, Bigglesworth and Enid Blyton. Not only were they new, but they were in paperback and competing, apparently successfully, with modern offerings. My hard-earned ruppees were spent then and there for all they had. The new Hentys had been edited very expertly with much of the drawn out description and verbiage of the 1880's eliminated, and the result was the essence of pure Henty. Only a small number have apparently been reprinted. "With Clive in India" was not one I found in Madras! "The Young Carthaginian was my particular favorite of the reprints.

Since that time Denis R. Rogers, Ellisarian par Excellence and gentleman has sent me from England "In the Irish Brigade" and "Through Russian Snows" as well as many Biggles. From the advertising (these are published by Dragon books) "Under Drake's Flag" has also been published as well as "The Coral Island" by Ballantyne. I enjoy reading the abridged versions of Henty and it seems significant that these books, written 80 odd years ago are still

popular with both English and Indian children.

During a recent visit my father told me an interesting story about his experiences with Henty. (Many of my early Hentys came from him and my early Castlemons from his father, proving no New England Yankee ever throws anything away, particularly good literature!) Before World War I college was the exception for most boys and my father had taken a general course at Weymouth High School. An opportunity developed to go to the University of Massachusetts, but he did not have enough credits to matriculate. He found an examination was being given by the college for credit in English History, a course which he had never taken. With relatively little time to prepare, he took the examination and passed it, mainly, he says, on the history he had learned from avidly reading Henty as a boy. He was accepted, eventually graduated, and attended his 55th reunion this summer.

In our discussion of series books and dime novels, I showed him the Frank Merriwells in the various paperback versions and the McKay hard cover edi-

tions of the same books. He looked at them and laughed.

"Your grandmother was death on dime novels," he said. "In fact the establishment of the time had pretty strong objections to paperbacks. However, every Christmas we were given hard cover books by relatives and one year a singularly obtuse or singularly sympathetic relative gave me a hard cover "Frank Merriwell." The book was attractive and well-bound and my parents raised no objection whatsoever. I doubt if they ever made the connection with the dime novel.

In a more modern vein, the value of Tom Swift (one shouldn't have to prove this, but it is sometimes necessary) was shown when my son was taking a graduate level course at Purdue in the Physics of Semiconductor Devices. The class was discussing the characteristics of platinum and the instructor noted that unfortunately platinum is not readily available.

"I don't suppose anyone knows where most of the world's supply is located?" he asked, "In Siberia," my son answered promptly. The instructor and the rest of the class were apparently a bit surprised at his erudation. They

should not have been. Anyone who has studied (we don't read Tom Swifts, we study them) "Tom Swift and his Air Glider" knows that the best platinum comes from Siberia and although Tom brought a goodly share of it home, there is still lots left.

Maybe the moral of all this is, "you can learn more from series books than you might think," or "don't judge a book by its cover!"

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 572. Walter H. McIntosh, P. O. Box 393, Salem, N. H. 03079 (New member)
- 373. David Soibelman, 119 N. Harper Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90048 (New)
- 374. Walter Rigdon, P. O. Box 546, Cloverdale, Calif. 95425 (New member)
- 100. David K. Edelberg, 1119 W. Belden Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60614 (New add.) 575. Nils Hardin, 7623 Carondelet St., Clayton, Mo. 63105 (New member)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

My dear Mr. LeBlanc,

Please consider this note and the attached check as my application for membership in the Dime Novel Brotherhood. And I shall look forward to the monthly Roundup and expect to read it with as much delight as I did the April 15, 1955 issue with J. P. Guinon's piece on the Frank Merri-

well reprints.

J. P. and I have become friends, courtesy U. S. mail, since I first wrote to him a few years ago about acquiring some of the Merriwell originals. We have continued a correspondence, as his letters have indicated a scholarly mind, a deep and abiding interest in the high place the Frank/Dick stories have in Americana, a sincere devotion to the spread of friendly interest in their stories, and an amazing knowledge not only of the hundreds of Merriwell stories, but an awareness of the times and of the life-style which prevailed from April 18, 1896 (Issue No. 1) to the sorry day when the last number rolled off the press. A social historian with a comprehensive knowledge of baseball and other art forms, and a friendly man with a skilled and colorful pen-that's J. P. Guinon.

I know I shall enjoy being a member of the Brotherhood. And thank you for your consideration.

David Soibelman

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THE SAGA OF FRANK MERRIWELL

Tip Top Library No. 3. May 3, 1896. Frank Merriwell's Medal; or Plebe Life in Camp.

Location: Fardale

Time: Freshman year at Fardale.
16 years old.

Principal Characters: Bart Hodge, Barney Mulloy, Hans Dunnerwust, Prof. Zenas Gunn, Lt. Gordan, Hawkins.

Frank is presented with a medal for his bravery in saving the life of Inza Burrage as described in Tip Top No. 2. Prof. Gunn makes the presentation speech at a ceremony in which the student body is present. Leslie Gage, an upper classman is envious and makes disparaging remarks to cadet Lt. Swift. He is later observed by Swift to be in deep conversation with Hugh Bascomb and Bart Hodge. He decides he had better warn Frank of probable trouble but finding Frank busily engaged walking with Inza, he delays till a later time. Frank walks Inza home and upon his return is accosted by a group of masked students. His cry for help is heard by Barney Mulloy who has come to meet Frank after being told by Swift of probable trouble for Frank. The gang is dispersed by the two of them. Upon return to camp Frank discovers that his medal is missing. A thorough search is made of the area but to no avail. The conclusion is reached that it was stolen. During the fight Frank had managed to grab the handkerchief that was being used to try to chloroform him, and this now becomes an important clue. A letter "H" was monogramed on one corner. Frank notices that Hodge has another handkerchief monogramed in the same manner but says nothing.

Later that night the upper classmen give all four tentmates, Merriwell, Mulloy, Dunnerwust and Hodge a rough time. Their tent is collapsed, they are toboganned; that is wrapped in their blanket and dragged around the camp streets, tossed in blankets and finally burning red pepper is fanned into the tent.

WANTED TO BUY

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Hodge visits Prof. Gunn in order to try to clear himself of suspicion in the attack on Merriwell. At a hearing he proves that he had attended a band concert at the time of the assault. He has an altercation with a cadet named Hawkins and a fight is in prospect. He asks Frank to be his second but Frank refuses. Hugh Bascomb is finally selected. Frank attends the fight and sees Hodge give the more powerfully built Hawkins a beating. Bascomb tries to drug Hodge between rounds but is discovered by Frank. Hodge finally knocks out Hawkins. He takes his victory in a humble way which is a surprise to most of the students.

Later that day he is searched by Lt. Gordan and Frank's medal is found. He is charged and locked up in the guardhouse. Frank is confused. The next day a fire breaks out in Prof. Gunn's laboratory and Frank together with Hawkins attempts to put out the blaze with fire grenades. Hawkins, upon opening a door is enveloped in flames and Frank drags him away and carries him to safety. Hawkins seems to be pretty badly off and asks to see Frank. He confesses that it was he who had the medal and had planted it on Hodge to implicate him. Hodge and Frank shake hands for the first time. Hawkins recovers, but leaves Fardale. Only Frank and Hodge see him off.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

STAMFORD'S NED BUNTLINE, by Ed Moore. In Oneonta, N. Y. Star, August 8, 1972. A short article on the life of Ned Buntline. Very good.

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(Continued on next page)

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WANTED

GLEASON'S LITERARY COMPANION

1866-Jan. 20, Feb. 24, March 24, March 31, June 2, Aug. 25, Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Dec. 15, Dec. 29.

1867-Jan. 5, Mar. 16, Apr. 13, Aug. 3, Aug. 24, Sept. 28, Nov. 9, Nov. 30,

1868-Jan. 4, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, Mar. 14, Apr. 11, May 16, June 13, July 25, Aug. 22, Sept. 26, Oct. 31, Nov. 21, Dec. 26.

1869-Jan. 9, Feb. 27, Mar. 6, Mar. 27, Apr. 10, Apr. 24, May 1, May 15, May 22, June 5, July 24, Aug. 21, Aug. 28, Sept. 18, Oct. 2, Oct. 9, Oct. 23, Oct. 30,

1870-Jan. 1, Mar. 19, Apr. 16, June 25, July 23, Sept. 3.

GLEASON'S MONTHLY COMPANION

1872-Jan., July.

1873-Mar., April, June, August, Oct., Nov.

1875—Jan., June, Nov., Dec.

1876-August

1877—October, November, Dec.

1878—July, Oct., Nov., Dec.

GLEASON'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE—Sept., Oct., 1882

GLEASON'S PICTORIAL DRAWING ROOM COMPANION

1853-Dec. 17

1954—July 1.

1859-Jan. 29.

1860-Jan. 7, Feb. 19, Feb. 26, March 17, March 31.

GLEASON'S WEEKLY LINE-OF-BATTLE SHIP

1858-Nov. 13, Nov. 20, Nov. 27, Dec. 11, Dec. 25.

1859-Jan. 8, Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, Mar. 12, Mar. 26, Apr. 30, May 14, May 21, June 18, June 25, July 9, July 30, Aug. 6, Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Oct. 8, Oct. 22, Nov. 12, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Dec. 17, Dec. 24.

GOLDEN ARGOSY

Vol. 3, Nos. 154-172-Nov. 14, 1885-March 20, 1886.

Vol. 5, No. 232-May 14, 1887

THE GOLDEN MAGNET—April, 1891.

GOOD NEWS

Vol. 1, Nos. 14-16—Aug. 14-Aug. 28, 1890. Vol. 1, No. 29—Nov. 27, 1890 Vol. 2, No. 33—Dec. 20, 1890

Vol. 3, Nos. 69-81—Aug. 29-Nov. 21, 1891 Vol. 4, No. 94—Feb. 20, 1892 Vol. 5, No. 114—July 9, 1892

Vol. 6, No. 134—Nov. 26, 1892

Vol. 6, No. 141—Jan. 14, 1893

Vol. 14, No. 356—March 13, 1897

GRAHAM'S ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE—Jan. 1858

HALF HOLIDAY—Vol. 1, Nos. 1-13—Feb. 5-April 30, 1898

HARPER'S MONTHLY

Dec. 1858, Dec. 1863, March 1864.